

COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

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J. C. Spilman, Editor

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In Memoriam
John W. Hancock, Jr.

Sequential page 1425

In Memoriam John W. Hancock Jr.

It is with a deep sense of loss that we report the death of CNL Patron and Benefactor John W. Hancock Jr. of Roanoke, Virginia. He was 89 years of age. He is survived by his wife Isabel, two daughters, Sally and Betty, four grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

Jack founded a Roanoke industrial empire and became one of the valley's most generous benefactors and influential citizens. He died Thursday, March 5th, in the afternoon after what was described as "a very brief illness" and was buried following a private service Friday morning. In keeping with his penchant for privacy, Hancock had insisted before his death that few outside the family be notified until after he was buried.

Hancock got his start in business selling Quonset huts in a housing-starved economy after World War II and went on to found Roanoke Electric Steel in 1955, the first mini-mill in the Southeastern United States. His major influence was as an organizer of, and contributor to, civic and political causes, a passion that he pursued up to the end. He was a very public man in a very private way.

He kept his interests in Early American Numismatics quietly to himself, sharing them with only a few other persons, one of whom was ye Editor with whom he graciously shared his knowledge and love of the Fugio Cents of 1787.

COMING IN OUR NEXT FEW ISSUES - -

Several new discoveries will be discussed, among them - -

- (1) A new Connecticut Copper 33.49-Z.7 (Ken Mote & Jeff Rock)
- (2) A new Fugio 17-T combination (discovered by Steve Tanenbaum)
- (3) Libertas Americana with corded border.

Plus a number on excellent articles by our Patrons - -

Sydney Martin has some thoughts on Wood's Hibernia Farthings

Dennis Wierzba has new data on the W. WOART JUS PACIS token

Byron Weston presents his ideas on "Evasion Hybrids"

Eric P. Newman will describe a newly "discovered" Broadside

containing valuation tables for various coins.

AND FINALLY - -

Congratulations are in order to CNL Associate Editor Philip L. Mossman

who has been presented a Special Recognition book award by the Sons of the Revolution for his book *Money of the American Colonies: A Numismatic, Economic*

and Historical Correlation. The award was presented Friday April 15, 1994 at a special celebration commemorating the Battles of Lexington and Concord

during a family night dinner party at Fraunces Tavern in downtown New York City.

The award was for "its unique contribution to the study of American History".

• • • J. C. Spilman • • •

Excerpts on Benjamin Dudley from Ray Williamson's Source Book

(TN-156)

Editor's Preface: In February 1993 (CNL No. 93, page 1363) we introduced our Patrons to Raymond H. Williamson's "Source Book of American Numismatics" and from that Source Book drew several letters relating to Benjamin Dudley via correspondence between John Bradford, Continental Agent in Boston, and Samuel Huntington, President of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, plus an entry from the Diary in the Office of Finance [Robert Morris] in Philadelphia. From these letters we learned quite a bit about Benjamin Dudley, his several talents, his association with the government owned Fugio copper stock, his "escape" from France to America, and etc.

Now - - once again we have drawn from Ray's "Source Book" a series of letters regarding that same Benjamin Dudley who, it seems, had a number of problems both with his Mint, a Treasure Caravan, and with his efforts to obtain passage for his wife to America to join him. Even the French had a few problems with their portion of the "Treasure".

The adventures of Benjamin Dudley revealed by these letters together with other research notes compiled by Ray Williamson, read almost like a modern adventure story and comprise a really amazing bit of early American History and numismatics - - but little known to today's numismatist. As you will see, there are many opportunities remaining for present day researchers to dig out missing correspondence and additional facts. As our readers will notice, there are many missing letters and gaps still waiting to be filled! For those who may find these letters tedious, skip to Ray's summary on page 1436.

I should note here that CNL Patron Ray Williamson was researching original sources at the time he conducted these investigations. Many of these letters have subsequently been published by later researchers (1), but the overall story of Benjamin Dudley has remained hidden in the many fragmented letters, footnotes, and etc. of these later works; herein we had tabulated Ray's original citations of sources. Now let us move on, dear reader, and learn the facts - - blow by blow. In another article in this issue by CNL Associate Editor Michael Hodder (page 1442) you have the opportunity to join with Mike in speculating on the many mysteries associated with the life and times of Benjamin Dudley in America.

And so we begin now with a short note in the official "Diary" of Robert Morris - - **JCS**

(1) Endnotes page 1436

[Copy of entry for July 16, 1781, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Wrote to Mr. Dudley at Boston inviting him hither in consequence of the Continental Agent Mr. Bradford's letter respecting him referred to me by Congress. [Morris' letter not located.]

[John Bradford's June 28 letter was read in Congress on July 9; the part of it concerning copper was referred to Robert Morris, Supt. of Finance.] (See CNL No.93, page 1365)

[Copy of entry for July 17, 1781, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Wrote Mr. Bradford respecting Mr. Dudley. [Letter not located.]

[From the *Journal Of Claude Blanchard*, Commissary of the French Army; En Route from Peekskill to Philadelphia, near Whippany, N.J. Translated from the French by William Duane; Edited by Thomas Blanch, Albany, 1876; p. 133]

[Notified of arrival of Frigate La Resolúte carrying very large quantity of Silver Coin from France to the United States.]

Sept. 2, 1781

I learnt, on the way that the La Resolúte frigate had arrived; we were impatiently expecting it; it had been announced to us by the [French Frigate] *Magicienne*. It brought money, as well for us as for the Americans, and some goods for their troops. It also brought back Mr. [Col. John] Laurens, the son of [Henry Laurens] a president of the Congress, whom I have already mentioned, and who [John] had gone to France in the Month of February to ask for this assistance.

[Complete copy of letter of Sept. 5, 1781 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Rev. Dr. William Gordon, Boston. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

Office of Finance

I have received your Favor of the twenty third of August enclosing a letter from Mr. Dudley, [Neither letter located.] I am much obliged by your kind and polite attention for which I pray leave to return you my Thanks. The sooner Mr. Dudley comes forward the sooner will have an opportunity or (sic) remedying the State of his Finances which now calls for that Interposition of Mr. Bradford and yourself which you have been so kind as to Promise .

Should you come to this City as you seem to have determined It will give me a very particular Pleasure to see you and Personally to make my Acknowledgements (sic) for your Favors. RM

[Complete copy of letter of Sept. 5, 1781 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Benjamin Dudley, Boston. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

I am favored with your letter of the twentieth of August last. There are many reasons why I wish rather to see you as soon as you can conveniently come forward than at a later Period. I am therefore to request that you do not delay your Journey longer than may be absolutely necessary. [Dudley's Aug.20, 1781 letter not located.]

[Complete copy of letter of Sept. 11, 1781 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Rev. Dr. William Gordon, Boston. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official Letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

I have the Pleasure to acknowledge the Receipt of your Favor of the twenty ninth of August last [not located] - relating to Mr. Dudley. Tench Francis, Esq. the bearer of this Letter who is charged with the Care of conducting the Money late arrived at Boston to this City will also take care of Mr. Dudley and defray his Expenses hither. I shall be glad if Mr. Dudley will come with him and afford his Assistance in protecting the Treasure.

With very great respect I have the Honor to be - - RM

[Complete copy of entry for September 11, 1781, from Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance to Tench Francis, in Papers of Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance, Official Letterbook "A", Philadelphia. Manuscript in Library of Congress; microfilm in Butler Library, Columbia University.]

[Instructions for the Specie Caravan, Boston to Philadelphia]

You will proceed from hence to the Town of Boston in the State of Massachusetts Bay with all possible Expedition and on your way you will deliver the Letter enclosed to General Heath and concert with him the measures which may be necessary for the Business entrusted to your Care. Enclosed is an account of two million five hundred thousand, two hundred and twenty four Livres eighteen Sous on Board of the french Frigate la Resolue commanded by Monsr. le Chevalier de Langle together with his receipt for that Sum also a letter from Col. [John] Laurens [not located] to him on the subject and an Order from me in your Favor to receive it, which you will do and give duplicate Receipts. [Calculating the amount in dollars: 2,500,224 X \$0.182 =\$455,041 but Horace White, *Money and Banking*, 6th Ed., page 396 says \$462,862]

By Col Lauren's (sic) report to Congress [Sept. 3, 1781] it appears that Notwithstanding this money was put in double Casks yet the Carriage of it to Brest so injured them that a Part was from Necessity shifted into Boxes previous to the Embarkation as you will see by the account abovementioned. The remainder is in a very shattered Condition wherefore great Care and Attention must be paid to the Removal. The sum is so large that too much Time should be consumed in counting it. I therefore propose that from a thousand to two thousand Crowns be counted and weighed after which the Remainder may in like Manner be weighed and if the Scales are tolerably good this mode will determine the amount with accuracy.

It is my Intention to have this Money brought from Boston to this Place as soon as the necessary Attention to its Safety will permit. At the same Time I mean to have it transported with the utmost possible economy. With these views and with a further view to the public Service in a different Line and on different Principles I desire you to invest as much of it ~ you can in Good Bills of Exchange drawn by Authority of his most Christian Majesty or of Congress. These you must buy as Cheap as possible, but so as not to exceed the Rate of seventy five spanish Dollars for five hundred and twenty five Livres Tournois. [7:1]

With Respect to the Remainder I wish it to be brought here in the following manner. Have strong square boxes made of Oak Boards to contain about fifteen hundred to two thousand Crowns each and have large strong Chests made of thick Oak Plank of such Shape as may be most proper and of Size to contain about twenty of the lesser Boxes. These larger Chests had best be fixed on the Axell of an Ox Cart from which the Body has been previously removed. They should when closed be strongly strapped about with Iron. Four oxen led by one horse will then draw it with Ease. Tho Axle, Wheels and Tongue of the Carts should be very strong and good because the Roads this (sic) which they are to come are very rough. I think it best that the Teams should be purchased and I should prefer Oxen of six Years Old and the Horses from seven to ten years old. Honest Sober Teamsters mutt be hired on the best Terms in your Power.

Inclosed you have an Order to General Heath for an Escort of Dragoons who will proceed to Boston so as to be ready to set off by the Time you shall have got every Thing in Readiness which I hope and expect will be very speedily. I presume General Heath will give the proper Orders to the Officer commanding the Escort for mounting guards where you stop and taking proper Positions along the Road but if any Thing of this Sort should be omitted you will yourself apply to the Officer on the Subject and lest he should conceive an Impropriety in the Application shew this Letter to him and request his particular Care and Attention.

From Boston to Philadelphia the following Rout (sic) is recommended to me which may nevertheless be altered as Time and Circumstances shall require for greater Safety. From Boston to Worchester to Springfield to Greenwood to Salisbury to FiskKill to New Windsor or Newburgh to Sussex Court House or Newton to Easton to Philadelphia. When you shall have arrived at Salsbury (sic) you will send to General Heath and let him know your intended Rout that he may take such Positions from Time to Time as will cover you perfectly and also that he may give you his Directions as to what may be proper for you to do in Order to avoid all Risque which Directions you will comply with.

I think it would be useful that while you are in the dangerous Parts of the States of New York and New Jersey you should be escorted by an additional Number of Dragoons and also by a Party of Infantry but I shall submit this to Genl. Heath ~who will be the best Judge. At any Rate it will be useful that the Team Men be armed each with a good Musket and Bayonet because they may then assist the Cavalry in Case of an Attack. The Arms may be furnished for this Purpose from the Public Magazines and they may be again lodged in the Public Magazines here.

Should you upon Information find that the Weight I propose will be by any means inconvenient or productive of Delay let the smaller Boxes contain a lesser quantity so as to accommodate the Matter better and increase the Number of Teams proportionately. On the Road from Boston you will pay the Expences of the Escort &C and you will study to render the Expence as light as possible. It may be useful to encourage the Guard with the Hope of Reward if upon Information you find it proper you may on my Part promise them one Month's Pay in Specie on their arrival at this Place.

Keep all your Motions and Intentions secret and give out that you mean to go from Springfield to Claverack from Claverack to Rhinebeck from Rhinebeck to Esopus from Esopus to Minisink from Minisink to Easton and when you quit this Rout to go to FishKill move with as much Rapidity as your Cattle will permit. Take Care therefore to have good Cattle and spare them in the beginning of the Route.

No instructions can apply accurately to all Circumstances but what has been said will explain to you my Views. In the various Contingencies which may arise be directed by your own Prudence as shall be best for the Public Interest and Service. You will keep an exact account of all your Expences which I am convinced will be as moderate as they ought to be and this will accord well with Finances in the State ours are.

I know your Zeal to serve the Public too well to suppose you will look for an extravagant Reward for your Time and Trouble, therefore am content to leave that Reward to be fixed after your trouble shall be known and your loss of Time ascertained. The Pleasure of serving your Country and the Confidence which is placed in you will be a more agreeable Part of your Reward. And I hope the Event will justify that Confidence and give Joy to every Friend of the United States. I wish you a Safe, a speedy and a prosperous Journey and I am very respectfully. . .

P. S. I have thought proper to join Majr. Saml. Nichols with you in this important Commission, he will go and return with you, he is instructed to give his Advice and Assistance in everything, wherein It may be necessary.

[Complete copy of letter of Sept. 11, 1781 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Benjamin Dudley, Boston. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official Letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

If you should not have left Boston before this reaches you I shall be glad that you will come with Tench Francis Esqr. who is the bearer of it and who is directed to defray your Expenses hither.

As the business on which I want to confer with you is important and will not admit of Delay, I hope to see you speedily. RM

[Complete copy of letter of Sept. 11, 1781 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Tench Francis, Philadelphia. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official Letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

Enclosed you have two letters, the one for Doct. Gorden, and the other for Mr. Benjamin Dudley. I pray you to enquire at Mr. Bradfords in Boston the Means of conveying these Letters and having read be pleased to seal and send them.

Should Mr. Dudley think proper to come on with you, you will provide him with a Horse Saddle &C and defray his expenses on the Road. He will probably be useful to you in putting up the Money as he is an excellent Mechanick and may therefore strike out Hints on the Subject which would escape others. I hope you may find him a useful, agreeable (sic) and entertaining Companion on the Road.

[From the *Journal Of Claude Blanchard*, Commissary of the French Army; Before Yorktown, Virginia. Translated from the French by William Duane; Edited by Thomas Blanch, Albany, 1876; p. 143]

[The French portion of the Treasure arrives near Yorktown, with a bang.]

Sept. 23, 1781

Our [French] generals [who had arrived in Chesapeake Bay with de Grasse] came and deposited with me 800,000 livres in piasters, which M. de Grasse had brought for us. The grenadiers and chasseurs also arrived; everybody applied to me for bread, vehicles and all possible necessities. I was alone and not a single employee to assist me. On the 23rd I was sick, owing to fatigue; I had spent part of the previous nights on my feet. In the evening I threw myself on a bed; fortunately two employees arrived who made a report to me and to whom I gave orders from my bed. During the night, as I was more oppressed than drowsy, the floor of the chamber adjoining that in which I was, suddenly broke in pieces with a great noise. This accident proceeded from the money which I had deposited there; it was on the ground floor and underneath was a cellar, fortunately not very deep; the floor, being too weak, had been unable to bear the weight of these 800,000 livres in silver. My servant, who lay in this room, fell down the length of a beam, but was not hurt.

[Extract from "Records of the General Accounting Office, Register's Office," Record Group 217, National Archives. Ledger "B" under date of Oct. 17, 1782 contains the following entry; (parenthetical material inserted from neighboring context.)]

Benjamin Dudley

For his Receipt dated Boston October 13th (1781) for
Seventy Six Crowns ----- = to 84 40 (Meaning \$84-40/90)

[Copy of entry for Nov. 4 1781, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Desired Mr. [Tench] Francis to advertise the Oxen, Horses and Waggon which brought the Treasure from Boston, for sale and to attend and Manage the Sales to the utmost advantage of the Public so that the entire accounts of his Journey and transactions may be settled.

The Continental Treasurer called with an Officer that brought 16 Million of Old Cont'l Money for which the Waggon are to be paid and Ordered him 100 dollars for that purpose.

[Copy of entry for Nov. 6, 1781, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia.]

Major Nichols arrived last night from Boston with a letter from Tench Francis Esqr. [not located] whom he left with the Treasure about sixteen miles from the City and as he will be in this day. I wrote orders for Mr. Francis to deliver the Money to Mr. Hillegas the Continental Treasurer and orders to the latter to receive the same and hold it to my Order only. [No mention of Dudley's arrival.]

[Copy of entry for Nov. 10, 1781, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia,]

Ordered some money on application of Mr. Dudley to pay his expenses.
Issued a warrant on Mr. Swanwick in favor of Mr. Dudley £15-19-3

[Copy of entry for Jan. 7, 1782, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia,]

Mr. Dudley applies about getting his wife from England. I promised him every assistance in my power.

[Complete copy of letter of Jan. 23, 1782 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Richard Yates, New York City (in British hands)]. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official Letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

At the request of a very honest Man who seems much distressed for the welfare of his wife, now in London, I beg to trouble you with the enclosed Letter, praying that you will that you will forward it, and if in consequence thereof Mrs. Dudley should com to New York, I beg of you to procure Liberty for her to come to her husband at this place. The money for her Passage and reasonable expenses in New York, which must be reasonable as possible, she may draw upon her Husband, Mr. Benjamin Dudley, and I engage that the draft shall be paid. I shall thank you for your attention to this poor Lady when she arrives and remain, Sir, . . Robert Morris.

[Copy of entry for May 20, 1782, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia.]

Mr. Dudley wrote me a letter [not located] this day and wanted money. I directed Mr. Swanwick to supply him, and then desired him to view the Masons' Lodge to see if it would answer for a mint, which he thinks it will, I desired him to go up to Mr. Wheelers to see how he goes on with the Rollers &c .

[Copy of entry for July 15, 1782, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia.]

Mr. B. Dudley applied for money, he is very uneasy for want of employment, and the Mint in which he is to be employed and for which I have engaged him, goes on so slowly that I am also uneasy at having this gentleman on pay and no work for him. He offered to go and assist Mr. Byers to establish the Brass Cannon Foundry at Springfield. I advised to make that proposal to Genl. Lincoln and inform me of the result tomorrow.

[Complete copy of letter of July 25, 1782 from Robert Morris, Office of Finance, Philadelphia, to Rev. Dr. William Gordon, D.D., Boston. Manuscript in Robert Morris Papers (Official Letterbooks), Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.]

In consequence of your Letter of the nineteenth of June, [not located] I sent for Mr. Dudley, told him the information you had so kindly given to me, and assured him of my desire to make him easy and happy. The

Business in which he is intended to be employed, is like many other important matters, is retarded by the tediousness of the States in supplying the Continental Treasury.

The Hon'able Secretary at War has commenced a correspondence with General Gates at my request, which I think will produce what he wishes Be assured that I take particular pleasure in promoting the interest and happiness of worthy men, and that I am with great esteem Sir, . . RM

[Copy of entry for Sept. 3, 1782, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Mr. Dudley applied for a passage for his Friend Mr. Sprague, pr. the Washington to France & for Mrs. Dudley back. Mr. Wheeler applied for money which I promised him in a short time.

[Copy of entry for April 2, 1783, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

I sent for Mr. Dudley who delivered me a piece of Silver Coin, being the first that has been struck as an American Coin. [Actually they were unauthorized patterns, and they followed the pewter dollars of 1776.]

[Copy of entry for Aug. 19, 1783, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

I sent for Mr. Benjamin Dudley, and informed him of my doubts about the establishment of a mint and desired him to think of some employment in private service, in which I am willing to assist him all in my power. I told him to make out an account for the services he had performed for the public, and submit at the Treasury Office for Inspection and settlement.

[Copy of entry for Nov. 21, 1783, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Mr. Dudley applies for money. He says he was at half a guinea a week and his expenss borne when he left Boston to come about the mint, and he thinks the public ought to make that good to him. I desired him to write me and I will state his claims to Congress.

[Copy of entry for Jan. 7, 1784, in Diary in Office of Finance, Robert Morris, Philadelphia]

Mr. Dudley after settlement of his account, which I completed by signing a warrant.

[Extract from Thomas Jefferson's Journal of May 7, 1784, which summarizes a letter (not located) from Jefferson at Annapolis to (probably Benjamin Dudley); *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 7, p 224.]

Dudley. That I have sent on 2d pr. spectacles to Virga. -- he may expect the 1st or the money in a fortnight.

Other letters cited in the *Papers Of Thomas Jefferson* mentioning Dudley, but not by his first name, as a maker of spectacles:

May 7, 1784, Thomas Jefferson to James Madison (p 228)

May 8, 1784, Thomas Jefferson to James Madison (p 231)

May 13, 1784, James Madison to his father, Rev. James Madison. (p 228)

May 15, 1784, James Madison to Thomas Jefferson (p 258)

[Extract from letter from Francis Hopkinson, Philadelphia, to Thomas Jefferson, May 12, 1784, in *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 7, p 245.]

(Long letter soliciting Thomas Jefferson's help in obtaining the U. S. Mint Superintendency for Hopkinson, if & when a Mint should be established; states that Robert Morris had marked out this station for him. On recipient's copy in the Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, the following statement was first written by Hopkinson, then deleted by drawing a line through the words)

We have a Machine here already constructed by Mr. Dudley for the Purpose by Order of Mr.. [Robert] Morris. (Reference is to a coining press.)

Beyond this date, I have found nothing.

In the above quotations concerning Dudley, I have tried to include those on his personal inter-relationships rather than the many numismatic items.

Editors Note: The following statement appears on page 33 of *A History of the Bank of North America* by Lawrence Lewis, Jr.; Philadelphia, 1882:

"About that time [August, 1781] a French frigate arrived in Boston, bringing to the national treasury a most opportune remittance of about \$470,000 in specie. The sum was immediately brought to Philadelphia and lodged in the vaults of the bank ..."

There is a great deal more to this story than is contained in the official bank history! Ray tells us about it in the following summarization:

The story of the Treasure Caravan is quite an item, believed to be available only in manuscript (2)(3). The salient facts will now be given, since they involve Massachusetts history:

In 1780 Ben Franklin in Paris wangled an outright gift from the French king, Louis XVI, of French crowns equal in value to Spanish \$462,505-45/90. On May 26, 1780, this treasure was remitted as 2083 bags of silver crowns by Vaughn & Le Moine of Brest. This shipment is also in the amount of 2,500,000 livres. The road to Brest was so rough that two of the double money casks broke open en route.

Col. John Laurens, son of Henry Laurens of South Carolina (former President of the Continental Congress) had been sent by Congress to France for military supplies and anything he could get his hands on. He arrived in Brest in mid-March 1781. He sailed from Brest on The Resolve (Capt. Monsr le Chevalier de Langle) on June 1, 1781. They did not reach Boston until August 25, having been so long at sea they were feared lost. They had the treasure on board. Louis XVI had directed that the gift be placed in the hands of George Washington for his personal disposition, but Congress turned it over to Robert Morris, Financier.

On Sept. 11, Robert Morris wrote a very long letter to Tench Francis (he became the first cashier of the Bank of North America on Nov. 1, 1781). The letter directed Francis to proceed at once to Boston, skirting British-held New York, and bring the treasure back to Philadelphia. The sum was so large that Francis was directed to count a sample quantity and weigh the rest when he gave his receipt.

Morris recommended the following route for returning the treasure: "From Boston to Worcester to Springfield to Greenwood to Salisbury to Fish Kill to New Windsor or or Newburgh to Sussex Court House or Newton to Easton to Philadelphia." General Heath was to supply an armed guard. To afford greater secrecy, they should state their return route as: Springfield to Claverack to Rhinebeck to Esopus to Minisink to Easton. At Boston, Francis was directed to "Have strong square boxes made of Oak Boards to contain about fifteen hundred to two thousand Crowns each and have large strong Chests made of thick Oak plank of such Shape as may be most proper and of Size to contain about twenty of the lesser boxes. These larger Chests had best be fixed on the Axell of an Ox Cart from which the Body has been previously removed. They should when closed be strongly strapped about with Iron. Four oxen led by one horse will then draw it with ease. The Axle, wheels and Tongue of the Carts should be very strong and good because the Roads ... are very rough." There must have been 10 wagons to carry the 27,100 lb. avdp. of silver crowns over the back roads.

Francis sold the 56 oxen, 12 horses and sundry articles at auction in Philadelphia on Nov. 17, 1781 for \$2836-63/90; the treasure went in the Bank of North America.

RW

ENDNOTES

- (1) (a) *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*. Edited (1973) by E. James Ferguson with John Catanzariti, Associate Editor. Nine volumes when complete.
(b) *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (1952) Edited by Julian Boyd.
- (2) Series 7, Massachusetts Historical Collections: "The Heath Papers", Vol. 5, p. 240.
- (3) Editors Note: In recent years the story of the Treasure Caravan has been researched and published by several writers, most recently by our own Associate Editor Gary Trudgen! See "The French Treasure Caravan"; SAR Magazine (National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution); Spring 1994; Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 4, pages 20 - 23. Gary's well written article includes a detailed map of the caravan route, illustrations of a French Crown that made up the tons of weight of specie that the caravan transported from Boston to Philadelphia, and portraits of Robert Morris and Tench Francis. Interestingly, he does not mention Benjamin Dudley.



• • • Dr. Philip L. Mossman • • •

ROBIN'S MONEY

(TN-157)

When I was involved, or better stated, consumed for a dozen years writing my book, *Money of the American Colonies and Confederation*, I was always on the lookout for references to coins and currency in early literature, newspapers, diaries, etc. In my judgment, such old records remain a potential resource for first hand information derived from the personal experience of their authors. Recently I became acquainted with the short story, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," (1832), which contains a vignette about early Massachusetts paper money. It is safe to assume that its author, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), drew upon common or contemporary knowledge for his material. Indeed, he does attribute some of his references to the early historian, Thomas Hutchinson, who, parenthetically, as speaker of the General Court, helped engineer the transfusion of specie and English coppers into state coffers which stabilized the Massachusetts economy in 1749 when the shipment Spanish silver arrived on the Mermaid. #1

This present narrative is a Horatio Alger-type tale of a country youth, Robin Molineux, who travels to the metropolis of Boston seeking his rich, influential relative, Major Molineux. It is the teenager's ambition that this wealthy kinsman will be instrumental in his personal advancement. Robin encounters a most unfriendly reception as he witnesses his unpopular Royalist relation, humiliated in a coat of tar and feathers, being led through the streets by a jeering mob. During this most unfortunate drama, Robin is comforted by another spectator who quickly perceived this astute country lad to be "a shrewd youth," and he predicted that Robin "may rise in the world without the help" of his newly plumed relative.

As Robin approached Boston at nine o'clock on that fateful night, he promised the ferryman "an extra fare" for his services at that late hour. To settle his account, Robin "finally drew from his pocket the half of a little province bill [Massachusetts Bay paper money] of five shillings, which, in the depreciation in that sort of currency, did but satisfy the ferryman's demand, with the surplus of a sexangular piece of parchment, valued at three pence." Having nothing more to his name than the "surplus" [change] just received from the ferryman, Robin entered a tavern moments later and yearned, "Oh, that a parchment three-penny might give me the right to sit down at yonder table!"

It is an instructive exercise to analyze the content of Hawthorne's 1832 short story to glean what we can about the circulation of Massachusetts paper currency from the facts revealed by the author. Hawthorne dated the events in his narrative to have occurred "not far from a hundred years ago," a time frame I would interpret to be in the late 1730s but prior to 1749, or a span of about thirteen years. Although the author could have been utilizing some poetic license in his description of Robin's money, his account of Massachusetts paper money seems quite compatible with our current understanding of this complex subject as documented by the studies of Eric P. Newman in *The Early Paper Money Of America*. #2

Hawthorne describes three circumstances in his brief sketch of our young hero's finances in this story which deserve further exploration. These include the rampant inflation of the period, the five shilling note divided into halves, and the threepence parchment small change currency. As a point of explanation, paper money practices of the other New England states prior to 1750 generally followed those of Massachusetts Bay.

To expand upon the first point, it will be

recalled that New England paper currency was caught in an inflationary spiral which extended from 1706 until 1750 at which time all Massachusetts paper money was retired upon receipt of the Spanish specie into the treasury, a feat orchestrated by Thomas Hutchinson as just recounted.^{#3} This large sum was long overdue from Parliament as a reimbursement for the colonial expenses incurred during England's campaigns against the French. Finally in 1749, the colonies were repaid and the paper money which had been printed to underwrite this debt was redeemed. During the half century before the final redemption was accomplished, the ensuing inflation saw several emissions of paper currency in three courses, Old Tenor until 1736, Middle Tenor until 1742, and lastly New Tenor.^{#4} The depreciated bill Hawthorne describes undoubtedly was an Old Tenor note, but since all of these notes continued to circulate together until redemption, it is hard to date the events of the story on that basis alone.

An informative chart listing 1737 exchange rates is presented by Newman.^{#5} For example, a five shilling note (60d.) in Massachusetts money of account prior to 1706 would have been worth 6.66 Spanish reales in silver. This was based on the standard of eight reales to 72d., Massachusetts, or the so-called "Proclamation Money," or "Proc.," or "Lawful Money" since it complied with the stipulations of the Proclamation of 1704 in that it represented the authorized 133% advancement over sterling. As inflationary pressures developed, all subsequent paper emissions lost value. In 1737, when one Spanish Dollar of eight reales passed for 22s. 6d., O.T., a five shilling note was reduced to a specie equivalent of a mere 16d. from the original 45d.^{#6}

Now in 1749, which is the upper date limit for this narrative, the O.T. money had depreciated to half the value of twelve years earlier since now one Spanish milled dollar passed at 45s., O.T. For the Middle Tenor emissions, the rate for the Spanish

silver dollar was 15s., M.T., and in New Tenor money, the value was 1 ls. 3d., N.T.

Prior to June 1722, the small coin medium in New England was inadequate and existing paper money was not denominated low enough to compensate for this deficit; in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island the smallest bill printed was a one shilling note whereas in Connecticut, the lowest amount was two shillings. The common practice, therefore, evolved for New Englanders to half or quarter these one and two shilling notes to make small change. This was not unlike cutting the Spanish dollar coins into eight bits. This custom of dividing paper money into fractional parts may have started innocently enough from the natural wear and tear process as bills, repeatedly folded and unfolded in the normal course of circulation, separated into two or even four parts. Whatever the first circumstance may have been, the routine of dividing notes into sections soon became rampant, laws to the contrary notwithstanding.^{#7} Newman mentioned that lower denominations of the October 14, 1713 emission were frequently halved and quartered to provide smaller change, a shortage which was later rectified in 1722 by the parchment pieces to be described. Whether the higher denominated notes were divided as Hawthorne narrates is not known and this may be a liberty he took.

To protect the Province's paper currency from this purposeful mutilation of dividing bills, the Massachusetts General Court passed legislation in June 1722 which authorized the exchange of £500 of paper bills of credit for an equal value in 1d., 2d., and 3d. denominated small change currency in parchment; "for Want of Small Money for Change ... Ill Minded people have presumed to Splitt or tare [tear], the New Small Bills of Credit of the Province, not withstanding the Proclamation to the Contrary" This emission of parchment was designed not only to preserve the paper money, but also to discourage the

currency of William Wood's Rosa Americana series whose introduction was threatening to fill the small change vacuum. Hence, the parchment money was designed with the dual purpose to discourage citizens from tearing more paper notes into fragments and to deter the importation of Wood's overvalued mixed metal tokens.^{#8} This parchment currency was authorized at a time when £230 Massachusetts money of account passed for £100 sterling, or a Spanish eight reales passed at 10s. 4.5d., Massachusetts.^{#9} Such a 3d. parchment piece would have had the purchasing equivalent of 1.7d. in terms of Proclamation Money rated at 100:133.3, sterling to Massachusetts, which was the exchange prior to the inflationary trend. The parchment money would have been subject to the same inflationary pressures as other paper currency since the £500 parchment emission was financed by the retirement of an equal value of bills of credit. By 1737, the parchment 3d. was essentially a worthless scrap and would have purchased but few ounces of bread and never would have entitled its bearer admission to the innkeeper's board despite Robin's aspirations to the contrary. In 1749, this 3d. parchment would have declined even further to only 50% of its 1737 purchasing power.

The halved five shilling bill in the story was probably from the October 14, 1713 emission. These bills were not immediately retired but continued to circulate as they were successively redated eighteen times until 1740.^{#10} In 1737 when the Spanish dollar passed at 22s. 6d. (O.T.), the halved five shilling note of 30d., Massachusetts money, would thereby be rated at 8d., specie. The hexangular 3d. change was then worth only 0.8d., specie. Its value was also ravaged by inflation like all other paper currency since this parchment money was just a lower denominated replacement for an equal quantity of bills of credit. We can calculate that 7.2d. was the double fare extracted from our young traveller by the ferryman for the trip across the water.

A single fare would, therefore, have been 3.6d., specie, for the passage to Boston. At the rate of 18 coppers to the shilling, specie, this fare would have been equivalent to 5.4 coppers, which is about twice the fee I would have anticipated. However, if the story took place in 1749, just before the redemption, when the halved five shilling note, O.T., was worth 4d. and the three pence parchment 0.4d., the ferry ride would have been a reasonable 2.7 coppers. To me, this is a more realistic cost for a single one-way fare. Although Hawthorne is purposely ambiguous about the true date, the ferryman's fee suggests that the story took place closer to 1749.

This brief essay is not meant to be critical of Hawthorne's short story but rather to encourage the reader to explore and appreciate the relationship expressed by this famous American author in regard to the details of contemporary history and the circulation of currency. In my analysis of the facts presented by Hawthorne, I found two possible overstatements in the regard Robin's money which could be regarded to be well within the boundaries of poetic license. These concern the fact that the actual hard money price for Robin's ferryboat ride was very expensive for 1737 but not for 1749, and the implication that the 3d. parchment note possessed a more significant specie value than it did. The parchment money was subject to the same inflation as the larger paper bills. While the Major's new wardrobe of tar and feathers was diagnostic of deterioration in colonial and metropolitan rapport, a few quick calculations of Robin's fiscal problems provide an insight into the circulation of Massachusetts currency prior to the 1749 redemption.

The author acknowledges with appreciation the helpful suggestions from Mr. Eric Newman in the preparation of this essay.

Of interest, there are two other short stories in which Hawthorne made reference to colonial currency. In "Grandfather's Chair," and "The Great Carbuncle" the plot involves Massachusetts silver coinages. In the first instance he describes the marriage of Judge Samuel Sewall to Hannah Hull, daughter of the mintmaster, John Hull.

ENDNOTES

1. Sallay, John M., "The DEPRECIATION of the Massachusetts Currency and the Effects of the REDEMPTION in 1750," CNL p. 524.
2. (3rd ed., Iola (WI) 1990).
3. McCusker, John J., *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775* (Chapel Hill, 1978) pp. 131-36, 140-41; Sally, "The DEPRECIATION of the MASSACHUSETTS Currency," *passim*.
4. Middle Tenor (M.T.) notes represented a three to one advance over Old Tenor (O.T.), and New Tenor (N.T.) a four to one increase.
5. Newman, *The Early Paper Money of America*, p. 470.
6. 72d. in silver was now rated at 270d., or 3.75 times, in money of account. 60d. divided by 3.75 = 16d.
7. Newman, *The Early Paper Money*, pp. 29-30.
8. See Newman, *The Early Paper Money*, p. 169 and Sylvester S. Crosby, *The Early Coins of America* (Lawrence, MA, reprint 1974) pp. 148-50. The one penny of this series was round while the twopence was rectangular.
9. McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, p. 14; £100 sterling = £230 Massachusetts
10. Such a note is illustrated by Newman, *The Early Paper Money*, p.166.

*** Gary A. Trudgen ***

HESSIAN PAYMENTS

(RF-66A)

Research Forum question 66 (CNL No. 96, page 1415) asks if anyone knows "...in what funds the Hessian mercenaries were paid?" during the American Revolution. One possible primary source that could answer this question would be a journal or diary kept by a Hessian soldier. Johann Conrad Döhla, a private in the Ansbach-Bayreuth contingent, kept such a diary. His diary is a complete and informative account of his experiences and observations during his service in the American Revolution (1).

Private Döhla crossed the Atlantic Ocean with his regiment in 1777. He began his American sojourn in June and was first stationed in the vicinity of New York City. After several months, which included a brief period in Philadelphia, his regiment was reassigned to the thriving seaport of Newport, Rhode Island. Here they spent more than one year before the British forces evacuated the area. They returned briefly to the New York/New Jersey locality before they were sent to reinforce the English command in Virginia. Eventually he participated in the battle of Yorktown in which he was captured when the British army surrendered to the American forces. After enduring two years as a prisoner of war, the war ended and he returned to his home in Bayreuth, Germany.

During his time in America as a Hessian mercenary, Döhla comments several times in his diary about receiving pay. Most of his remarks are excerpted as follow:

(1) Endnotes page 1442

July 16, 1777 Staten Island, NY

"...each day a man receives as pay seven English pence, or seven good kreuzer in German money."

September 16, 1777 Paulus Hook, NJ

"Each private in this detachment [a forage party in which Döhla participated], even the servants, received a Spanish dollar as a bonus."

February 24, 1780 New York City

"I was sent to Bloomingdale as an orderly with letters for a Hessian captain, from whom I received a gratuity of half a Spanish dollar."

February 22, 1781 New York City

"We received an allowance to cover the cost of our cooking utensils. Each man received nineteen coppers, or English half-pennies."

October 29, 1781 Fredericksburg, VA

"During the evening we received pay from our Major Beust. Each man received a Spanish dollar." [Döhla was now a prisoner of war after surrendering at Yorktown earlier in the month.]

December 13, 1781 Winchester, VA

"We received some money in part payment of our long overdue pay. Each private received one-half a Spanish dollar; each corporal, one; and sergeant majors, sergeants, quartermaster sergeants, and medics, two Spanish dollars."

"This money was obtained by Major von Beust from a merchant at Winchester for interest, because the shortage of money

was great among us and was the reason for many going into the countryside to seek work and nourishment, as we had not received any pay for more than two months."

March 14, 1782 Frederick, MD

"We received some money; each private one Spanish dollar in partial payment, from the officers' monies."

May 2, 1782 Frederick, MD

"During the afternoon we received our full pay in cash from 1 November 1781 to the last of March 1782, a full five months. Each man received ten Spanish dollars, from which each had thirty-six pence taken out for the flour that our officers had purchased."

April 2, 1783 Frederick, MD

"The two Ansbach regiments of Voigt and Seybothen received five months pay. Each private received nine Spanish dollars, four shillings, and seven half-pennies in [New] York money, which equals nineteen Franconian florins."

April 30, 1783 Frederick, MD

"Our two regiments again received pay for two months. Each man received four Spanish dollars, equal to eight Franconian florins."

May 17, 1783 Lancaster, PA

"We had a day of rest at Lancaster, and each man received one Spanish dollar in pay."

May 22, 1783 Philadelphia, PA

"In the morning each private received one Spanish dollar in pay."

June 16, 1783 Springfield, NJ

"We received our arrears in pay through the end of June. Each private received twelve Spanish dollars and twenty-one coppers."

June 18, 1783 Springfield, NJ

"We again received money. Each man received three [New] York shillings and two and one-half pence for arrears in our rations."

Johann Conrad Döhla departed America from Long Island on August 1, 1783 and safely arrived home again on November 20, 1783.

These many first hand accounts show that this contingent of Hessian troops was not paid in German currency. They were, however, paid in the American money of account, which, at this time, was primarily a mixture of Spanish and English currency.

ENDNOTES:

(1) *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution* by Johann Conrad Döhla, translated, edited and with an introduction by Bruce E. Burgoyne University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.



• • • Michael J. Hodder • • •

**MORE ON
BENJAMIN DUDLEY,
PUBLIC COPPER,
CONSTELLATIO NOVA'S
AND
FUGIO CENTS**

(CS-3)

Editor's Note: Here are some thoughts on Benjamin Dudley, copper, Fugio's and Constellatio Nova's. Mike has read the documents that cover the 1781-1785 period and that are the likeliest to contain references to these subjects. They confirm what Ray Williamson found and offer a few more glimpses into the North American Mint. Unfortunately, regarding where the Nova's were made there's no smoking gun to be found, just powder burns and empty shells. **JCS**

The evidence for the origin of the copper stock James Jarvis used to make Fugio's (and Connecticut's?) published in CNL (February, 1993, seq. pp. 1363-1366) as CS-2 can be augmented by some other scraps. Ray Williamson, Damon Douglas, and our trusty editor Jim Spilman all point to Benjamin Dudley's early involvement with what later became the Fugio copper stock. I think that there may be evidence here for Dudley's involvement with more than just that one federal issue. The publication of Robert Morris' correspondence and diary entries for the 1781-1783 period (in seven volumes so far, later years are yet to be published) offers confirmation for some ideas and suggestions for an even larger picture of which we will always only be dimly aware.

On June 28, 1781 John Bradford wrote a long letter to the President of the Continental Congress, Elias Boudinot. Bradford was the continental prize agent in Boston at the time. Bradford wrote that he had found a large store of copper in a warehouse in Boston that had been bought in 1779 with the intention of casting it into cannon. Bradford informed Boudinot that the copper had been assayed by one Benjamin Dudley, an English emigre metallurgist, and found to be very pure. Bradford asked Boudinot what he should do with the copper, concluding his letter with the comment that Dudley claimed he could make the necessary machinery to roll the copper and strike it into coins. Boudinot turned the letter over to Robert Morris, for reply.

Morris was the "Financier of the American Revolution" in a literal sense. Everything that had to do with provisioning the armies, building the fleet, obtaining foreign aid for the new nation, manipulating foreign exchange rates, everything from the highest matters of policy right down to the appointment of very minor local officials, was under Morris' control. Morris had two pet projects, both of which he felt were essential to ensuring America's freedom from foreign domination. The first was a national bank, to manage the country's finances from a central location. The second was a national mint, to make the coins the bank would manage.

Morris built his bank as the Bank of North America and capitalized it with French silver coins and sales of stock. Morris was a brilliant financier but, like John Law before him, Morris mixed his private Bank of North America and his public Superintendent of Finances roles, using the good faith of one to guarantee the insolvency of the other. This got him into a lot of trouble later on.

Morris' plans for a national mint took form as soon as he had been appointed Superintendent and had read Bradford's letter to Boudinot (July 9, 1781). On July 16 Morris

wrote Dudley, inviting him to come to Philadelphia, all expenses paid, to discuss some matters that might be of importance to Dudley's future. Morris was deliberately vague at this point, for fear of committing himself before he had even met Dudley in person.

Dudley didn't reply to Morris' invitation until August 20, when he wrote with his accepting it. Since Dudley was unemployed and broke at the time, living on the generosity of friends in Boston, it's possible that he was playing a hard to get game with Morris. Between August 20 and September 11, 1781, Morris and Dudley corresponded about when and how Dudley should leave Boston for Philadelphia. Finally, Morris invited Dudley to accompany Tench Francis, who was leaving for Philadelphia with the French silver loan. A company of dragoons had been detailed to protect the overland shipment. Morris wrote that Dudley should accompany them and help protect the treasure if necessary.

With Dudley on his way south, Morris' next job was to get the copper Bradford had written about moving towards Philadelphia, too. Two weeks after his last letter to Dudley, Morris instructed John Brown, the naval office agent in Boston, to "load *Active* with...as much of the Public Copper...as will ballast her..." and dispatch her to Philadelphia. The brigantine *Active* was built in July, 1779 at Marshfield, Massachusetts. She was not commissioned in the Continental Navy so we have no description of her size and burthen. A brigantine, however, was a two masted vessel that carried a crew of as many as 60 men and was armed with as many as 35 cannon. We do know that *Active* sailed to France and back in 1781 and had just arrived in Boston when she received orders to sail for Philadelphia. She was, therefore, probably large enough to have carried 20 or more tons of copper as ballast.

The copper arrived safely on November 29, 1781. John Brown had prepared bills of lading for the cargo *Active* carried but they do not survive today. Consequently, we do not know exactly how much copper was shipped to Philadelphia in November, 1781. The *Active* refitted over the winter and in March, 1782 Morris sent her to Havana for stores. On the way she was captured by the British and held as a prize of war.

There were other shipments of copper from Boston to Philadelphia at this time that are unexplained other than that they took place. On January 23, 1782, for example, Robert Morris wrote to the Navy Board that he agreed "...that the Copper and Copper nails belonging to the United States and now in Boston be lodged in care of the Marine Agent there, to await further orders." Was this copper different from the large amount seen by Bradford the previous year, or was it part of the same store? Was it ever shipped south? We do not know. Damon Douglas noted another shipment of copper, even later than this one, some 40 casks of rough copper and 10 of copper nails, shipped from Boston to New York on September 19, 1786. Was this the same copper Morris wrote about on January 23, 1782, or another, different, store? Again, we simply don't know the answer.

What is clear from these references, however, is that there was more than just one supply of government owned copper on the northeast coast in 1781-1783.

The copper shipped to Philadelphia aboard the ill-fated *Active* was off-loaded and stored in cellar of the Bank of North America. Some was used in January, 1782 to make weights for the bank's use. Dudley, who by now had arrived in Philadelphia with the French silver, was asked to conduct some assays on the French coinage, which he carried out in November.

By January, 1782 Benjamin Dudley was on the public payroll as an employee of the state. On January 2 he applied to Morris

for additional money, to cover the costs of his board in Philadelphia. Morris directed John Swanwick, Cashier of the Office of Finance, to pay Dudley's bills because "this gentleman is detained at the public expense as a person absolutely necessary in the Mint, which I hope soon to see established."

On January 15, 1782, following a request from Congress, Morris delivered a lengthy report on the state of the nation's currency. He recommended the coinage system that survives today in the exceptionally rare and historic 1783 Constellation Nova patterns. He also mentioned the copper that had arrived on board *Active*. Morris wrote "Shortly after my Appointment, finding that there was a considerable quantity of public Copper at Boston, I ordered it round to this Place [i.e., Philadelphia]. It has safely arrived, and will [when] coined amount to a considerable Sum. The necessary Machinery of a Mint can be easily [made] and there are Persons who can perform the whole Business."

Three days later Morris completed plans for a Mint and had them sent to Congress for approval. On January 26 Dudley was back asking for more money and complaining about being kept idle. Morris told him "...that the Plan of a Mint is before Congress and when passed, that he shall be directly employed, if not agreed to by Congress, I shall compensate him for his time &c." About a month after this meeting, on February 21, 1782, Congress directed Morris to prepare and report "...a plan for establishing and conducting..." a Mint of the United States.

On the 26th of February George Washington called on Morris to discuss problems with raising troops and money from Connecticut, which was resisting Morris' plans for supplying the war effort. After Washington left Dudley arrived, bringing to Morris "...the rough Drafts or Plans for the Looms [sic] of a Mint &c. I desired him to go to Mr. Whitehead Humphrys to Consult him about

Screws, Smiths Work &c that will be wanted for the Mint and to bring me a List thereof with an Estimate of the Cost." Dudley was back two days later to inform Morris that he had found a smith, Samuel Wheeler, who would make the rollers and screws for the Mint. Dudley said he had also located a good site for the Mint buildings, the old Dutch church on Fourth Street near Vine Street. Morris wrote in his diary that night that he had sent Dudley to look at the church building and that Dudley had returned straight away and reported that it would do for a mint.

On March 21 Samuel Wheeler arrived at Morris' office to discuss making the rollers for the Mint. Morris asked him to come back tomorrow and bring Dudley with him. The next day Morris spent the morning with George Washington, the afternoon with other business matters. Dudley and Wheeler showed up on time, but they were not happy campers. As Morris recorded the conversation in his diary, "Mr. Dudley and Mr. Wheeler came and brought with them some Models of the Screws and Rollers necessary for the mint. I found Mr. Wheeler entertained some doubts respecting one of these Machines which Mr. Dudley insists will Answer the purposes and says he will be responsible for it. I agreed with Mr. Wheeler that he should perform the Work and as neither he or I could judge of the Value that ought to be paid for it, he is to perform the same agreeable to Mr. Dudleys directions and when finished we are to have it valued by some Honest Men judges of such Work. He mentioned Philip Syng [Philadelphia silversmith 1703-1789], Edwd. Duffield [die cutter and clockmaker 1720-1801], William Rush [Philadelphia wood carver and sculptor 1756-1833]...all of whom I believe are good Judges and very honest Men therefore I readily agreed to this proposition. And I desired Mr. Dudley to Consult Mr. Rittenhouse [first director of the United States Mint, 1792-95] and Francis Hopkinson Esquire [signer of the Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia lawyer and heraldic artist 1737-91] as to

the Wheel or Machine in dispute and let me have their opinion."

Dudley must have hurried because the next day Morris wrote in his diary "Mr. Dudley called to inform me that Mr. Rittenhouse and Mr. Hopkinson agree to his plan of the Machines &c."

On April 12, 1782 Dudley called again on Morris, this time anxious to get started on making the machinery for the mint. We don't know what Morris said to him, but the next day Dudley called again to ask for "...a Horse to go up to Mr. Wheelers", probably to see to the work Wheeler was doing for Morris and the mint.

Nothing much happened for the next several months. On May 20 Dudley sent a letter to Morris requesting more money for his room and board and other expenses. Morris replied that the money would be paid and instructed Dudley to look at the old Masonic lodge in Lodge Alley, to see if it would suit for a mint. Dudley was also told to visit Samuel Wheeler's again, "...to see how he goes on with the Rollers &c." Apart from this, Morris recorded no other messages from or visits with Dudley (apart from Dudley's constant requests for more money) until July 15, 1782, when he wrote that Dudley "...is very uneasy for want of employment...". Dudley asked to be sent to Springfield, Massachusetts, to work with James Byers' at the cannon foundry there. Morris agreed to let Dudley apply for the job. The next day, however, Morris gave Dudley \$50 and instructed him to "...seek after Mr. Wheeler to know whether the Rollers &c. are ready for him to go to Work on rolling the Copper for the Mint." No further mention was made of Dudley's Springfield dream.

The mint's rollers and screws were finally finished by the middle of August, 1782. On the 22nd Samuel Wheeler visited Morris and asked for payment. Four days later, Dudley arrived and urged Morris to authorize work on rolling and coining, since the

necessary machinery was by now finished. On September 4th Wheeler was back, again asking to be paid. Morris put him off again.

October and November, 1782 passed in much the same way, with nothing concrete being accomplished regarding the mint and continual requests for more money from Dudley. By November even Morris, himself, was becoming anxious, writing in his diary on the 8th "...am very uneasy that the Mint is not going on."

All that changed with the dawning of the new year. On February 8, 1783 Jacob Eckfeldt was paid for making coinage dies. On March 21 Dudley received \$75 for "preparing a Mint" and in April a further \$22 through Morris' agent for "Dies for the Public Mint." In May Abraham Dubois was paid \$72 for "sinking, casehardening, &c. four Pair of Dies for the Public Mint" and at the end of June Dudley received \$77, again for "preparing a Mint."

We do not know all the details hidden by these brief entries in what Taxay nicely called "the expense books of the old government." We do not even know if the payments represented work done then, or several months earlier than the various payment dates. We do know that these were not charges against Morris personally, the Bank of North America, or the Office of Superintendent of Finances. Rather, they were charged to a contingency fund drawn on the government, itself, as purely public expenses.

On April 2, 1783 Morris sent for Dudley, who showed him a silver coin which Dudley had struck. Morris described it as "the first that has been struck as an American Coin." About three weeks later Dudley sent Morris "several Pieces of Money as patterns of the intended American Coins." These are, of course, the 1783 Constellation Nova patterns. Their striking, in silver and copper, shows that Dudley had available to him all the necessary equipment and

machinery to run a mint and make coins. Given the high gloss of the silver coins, and their sharpness of detail, the press he used to coin them on was capable of sufficiently high pressure to bring up fairly detailed die work. There was, in other words, a fully functioning mint in Philadelphia in April, 1782.

In this respect it is interesting to note that, on the same day that Dudley delivered the first coin to Morris, he also signed a receipt for 17 tons 2lbs of rough copper valued at \$2,630 12/90th payable to Benjamin Flower, "late Commissary General of Military Stores". Dudley can only have received the copper with Morris' authorization and in the expectation of striking it into American coins (remember, throughout this period Dudley was broke and had to keep approaching Morris for additional stipends, so he couldn't have been buying this copper for his own account).

By August 30, 1783, however, Dudley had surrendered the coining dies, made out his final statement of account, and seemingly disappeared from the history of the Mint of North America.

Here's where things start getting speculative.

We know that James Jarvis, contractor for the Fugio Cents, receipted for 12,809 lbs of copper on January 16, 1787 and 19, 195 lbs more on May 14 of the same year, a total of 32,004 lbs of copper. Using long tons of 2,240 lbs avdp. each, this total amounts to about 14.3 tons of copper. Damon Douglas, Walter Breen, indeed, most numismatic researchers, have always assumed that the copper Jarvis received in 1787 was the same copper Dudley had received about 4 years earlier. It is further believed that the copper Dudley received in 1783 was the same copper that was shipped from Boston in 1781 aboard *Active*. The story goes that Dudley took the 17 tons of copper in the spring 1783, smelted it, rolled it into sheets, and was

prepared to cut planchets for Morris' coinage when he was told to stop work on the mint that summer. The copper was left alone for the next four years, until Jarvis bought it for the Fugio's he was supposed to make for Congress.

There are a couple of problems with this commonly held belief, however. First, there's the problem of the copper, itself. The copper shipped from Boston to Philadelphia aboard *Active* in 1781 was stored in the cellars of the Bank of North America, not in a warehouse under the control of the Commissary of Military Stores. It was under Morris' control by virtue of being Agent of the Marine and Superintendent of Finance (the copper was a naval store, not an army supply). That was the copper Morris intended to coin for the United States, as he so stated in January, 1782. It appears that the 17 tons of copper Dudley obtained on April 2, 1783 was a different and separate supply altogether from the one that had been lying in the cellars of the Bank of North America in 1781.

Second, there's the problem of Dudley's April 2, 1783 receipt. This receipt is curious, to say the least. First, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Flower (Artillery) was Commissary General of Military Stores 1778 to July 1781; he was succeeded by Samuel Hodgdon. Flower had no governmental job in 1783, so what was an ex-Commissary General doing selling government copper? Second, if this was the same copper Jarvis later bought, how did it come to be owned by the government in 1787 when it had been sold to a private person four years earlier? Third, if Dudley's 17 tons cost \$2,630.12 in 1783 (about \$155 per ton), why did the 5 and 3/4 tons Jarvis received on January 16, 1787 cost \$1,501.50 (about \$265 per ton New York money)? Did the price of copper really nearly double in just four years? Then there's the problem of the different amounts involved. Dudley's receipt shows he signed for 17 tons whereas Jarvis' later receipts

amount only to 14 tons of copper. There is a discrepancy here, and while we do not know exactly what it means, to my mind it reads like another two entirely different supplies of copper.

If we accept that the copper shipped aboard *Active* and the copper Dudley received in April, 1783 were two different batches, then we have to ask ourselves why Dudley and Morris needed the additional 17 tons at the very time they had prepared a mint, gotten the necessary machinery built and installed, and were actually making pattern coins for presentation to Congress. What had happened to the public copper already on hand since *Active's* arrival in Philadelphia late in 1781?

We also have to ask ourselves if there is more to the similarity of the designs of the 1783 Constellatio Nova patterns and the regular 1783 and 1785 Constellatio Nova copper coins than the common wisdom tells us. We should also bring in the reverse designs of the 1785 and 1786 Vermont Landscape coins (blunt and fine rays), since they look just like those found on the reverses of the Constellatio Nova's, too.

The usual story about the pattern and regular issue Constellatio Nova's is that the former were struck in 1783 in Philadelphia by Dudley and Robert Morris, while the latter were struck in 1785 (some backdated) in Birmingham, England on the order of Gouverneur Morris, Robert's assistant. The supporting documentation for this story is an account that appeared in several London newspapers about the middle of March, 1786. As originally carried, the story said that the Constellatio Nova's had been struck on the order of the Continental Congress. Two days later, on March 16, one paper carried a correction to the account which now stated that the Nova's had been coined in Birmingham by the order of a New York merchant and that many tons had been struck.

Charles Ira Bushnell copied the story into his numismatic notebook (since lost), added a bit about 40 tons coined from one pair of dies, and mentioned that the New York merchant was believed to have been Gouverneur Morris. Later on, Walter Breen added his two cents worth, by injecting George Wyon's name into the story as the die-cutter who made the Nova's dies. That's how the story has come down to us, today.

The trouble with this story is that it's not believable, for several reasons. First, Gouverneur Morris was not really a New York merchant. He owned a stately home in New York, the landmark Morrisania, but from 1783 to 1788 he lived mainly in Philadelphia and continued working with Robert Morris, his old boss. From January to the middle of July, 1785, Gouverneur was actually in Virginia, on business for Robert. He returned to Philadelphia in August, 1785, remained there for the rest of the year, then hastened to New York in January, 1786 for the funeral of his mother. He stayed in Morrisania until March of that year. Morris was not in England in 1784 or 1785, so he couldn't have ordered the Nova's in person. His published letters do not contain a written order for the Nova's, either.

Second, whoever ordered the Nova's struck must have been intimately familiar with the designs of the 1783 patterns. But, by the middle of 1784 the pattern Nova coins were locked away in Charles Thomson's desk, where they stayed for an indefinite period ranging from a few years to nearly a century. So, in the absence of any coins to copy designs from, the regular issue Nova's must have taken their types either from the exact memory of someone who had seen and remembered the patterns, or from drawings showing the types. Drawings may have once existed, there's no way to know for sure.

Only a handful of men could have remembered the designs well enough to instruct a die cutter to make duplicates of them,

however: Benjamin Dudley, Robert and Gouverneur Morris. None of them qualifies as a "New York merchant".

Third, if we are to believe the March, 1785 newspaper accounts that the Nova's had been recently struck in Birmingham, we then have to explain how those coins could have travelled across to America in large enough numbers, have penetrated the depths of the northeast woods to such a grand extent, and been so influential in their attractiveness, that they directly inspired the designer of the 1785 Vermont landscapes to copy their reverse type for his own coinage, all in the short space of only three months (newspaper account dated March 16, 1785, Reuben Harmon's coinage types approved June 15 of that year)!

Fourth, if the Nova's were, indeed, struck in Birmingham in 1785, why did their coiner feel the need to back date one batch to 1783 but left the other batch dated the correct calendar year 1785? If the 1783 date was chosen to add some "legitimacy" to the coppers (since patterns had been struck that year), why weren't the 1785 dated Nova's in need of the same sort of cover story? Conversely, if the 1785 date was acceptable for some of them, why not for all? Or, perhaps, is the old story that the 1783 dated coins were back dated just unnecessarily confusing the issue. Are we, perhaps, dealing with two separate issues, both struck in the year stated on their reverses?

Fifth, there's absolutely no shred of evidence that George Wyon, or any other member of that large and talented family, had anything to do whatsoever with making the Nova dies. In fact, it's hard to understand how the father of England's chief engraver (Thomas Wyon the Elder) and himself a well-known die engraver at the pinnacle of his own career, could have made dies which misspelled a word in the legend! Breen had a penchant for looking to England as the source whenever he

encountered a well-laid out early American coinage die and he usually cast a Wyon or two in the part of die-sinker for it. He did this for some New Jersey, Immune Columbia, and Confederatio issue dies, as well as the Nova's. There's really no need to perpetuate these myths any longer.

Finally, given their usual disregard for fact-checking and their penchant for picking up stories from other published sources and parroting them as if they were hot news, the newspaper press of late 18th century England is not the most reliable of sources upon which to base an argument of fact. The story about the Nova's, in fact, was first told one way, then re-told in an entirely different way, all within the space of two days. The source for the second story, that the Nova's were struck in Birmingham, was the March 16th edition of the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*. Her sister publication, *The Daily Advertiser* published in London, reported on January 25, 1783 that it had recently learned that George Washington was not a man, but was really a woman dressed up to look like one. The source for this bit of scandal was given as the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of November, 1782 (no such story was published there, of course). The London paper said that it was lucky for the Americans that Washington's true sex hadn't been discovered earlier, or they would have lost the war! The paper's editor said he thought the story about Washington was improbable but he printed it on the front page with the rest of the news from abroad, anyway. In the light of the general unreliability of the press, perhaps we need more evidence for the origin of the regular issue Constellatio Nova's.

So, where does all this leave us? It looks to me like there's a strong circumstantial case for claiming the regular Constellatio Nova's were struck in Philadelphia in 1783 and 1785. We have seen that there were several different supplies of copper available in Philadelphia 1781-1783. We know that the copper shipped to Philadelphia in

1781 was not the same copper Dudley bought in 1783, and that neither was the same copper Jarvis bought in 1787. In late 1785, in fact, Rufus King noted that the government had 80 tons of copper on hand. We've found that Benjamin Dudley and Robert Morris had possession of two large copper caches, the first in 1781 specifically intended for coinage, the second bought in 1783 on the very day pattern coins were struck. We know that Dudley and Morris had a complete mint equipped and in working order by early 1783, including a facility for smelting copper in quantity, rollers for reducing silver and copper strip, a planchet cutter with interchangeable heads for different sized blanks, a Castaing machine for edging planchets, and a coining press of some kind. The plans and drawings for some of this machinery had been seen and approved of by David Rittenhouse, the foremost scientist of his day. Finally, we have pattern coins surviving that show that the mint could successfully strike coins which were not only well made, but were sharp and prooflike, too, as good as any small copper or silver coins made by the federal mint before closed collars and steam presses were introduced decades later.

The evidence for the Nova's being struck in Birmingham in 1785 is a contemporary newspaper account. There is documentary evidence on this side of the argument that is lacking on the other. However, when we examine this documentation, we find that it raises more questions than it settles. The first version of the story actually stated that the Nova's were struck by order of the Continental Congress! We've seen how unreliable newspaper stories could be at this time, especially when dealing with foreign news. We've also seen that in 1785 there was no easy way for anyone to have known enough about the 1783 patterns' types to copy them unless he had seen them earlier. And we know that there was very little time, early in 1785, for the Nova's to have been struck in England and then made their way to Ver-

mont to serve as the reverse type for the 1785 Landscapes. We've also found no easily understood reason for backdating one batch of Nova's but not another.

There's no way to argue the newspaper account out of existence. Some will always take it at face value and claim the Nova's as a private coinage struck in England. There's no way to know what happened to Dudley's and Morris' fully functioning mint of 1783. If my theory is correct, then their mint must have stayed together for another two more years, or at least have been reassembled, in order to strike the 1785 dated Nova's. In a letter to the Governor of Massachusetts dated September 5, 1785, Elbridge Gerry mentions that one of the stipulations Congress will place on any coinage contract is that the coins be struck "in the Mint of the Confederacy" (i.e., the mint set up by the Continental Congress). Does this letter mean there was a mint still operable in 1785? We don't know.

Robert Morris could claim some congressional authorization for his 1783 patterns. By extension, if the regular issue 1783 Nova's were struck in Philadelphia, they could be legitimized by the same understanding of congress' intentions. There was absolutely no congressional authorization of any kind for a coinage in 1785, however. This fact is the main stumbling block to the theory that the Nova's were struck in Philadelphia to Robert Morris' order.

In June and July, 1785 the Continental Congress debated resolutions about the mint and coinage, but postponed constructive action for another year. Rufus King mentioned in a letter of September 5, 1785 that "The United States have Eighty Tons of copper in their magazines; a company are here who brought with them from England the various machines and implements necessary for a coinage, and have rendered their services—a coinage in our own country is more pleasing than one abroad.", but what this means, exactly,

there's no way of knowing. After 1785, what happened to the mint machinery set up by Dudley and Morris? It certainly wasn't available to the government in 1792-93, when the first federal mint was established. It could have been sold off, of course, but a functioning mint was a valuable workshop of sovereignty and a national asset not to be lightly disposed away.

If the evidence for the Nova's being struck in England is weak and unreliable, the documentary and historical support for their American origin is circumstantial and fraught with serious difficulties. Therefore, we may never know for sure where the 1783 and 1785 Constellatio Nova's were struck. The coins, themselves, should be our surest evidence but even here there are differences of opinion. Some claim them for England on the strength of their fabric and color. Others say their prolonged use of rusted and heavily clashed dies betrays their American origin. The arguments either way can go on for ever with no clear winner. So could this essay!

Wherever they were made, the 1783 and 1785 Constellatio Nova's were meant to be American coins and should be collected as such. They never were English coins, even though an older generation of collectors felt they were. They belong in any colonial type or variety collection. The Constellatio Nova coppers are often overlooked by collectors, few collect them by Crosby variety, most being content with the two dates or the five Red Book types. They really need a new, in depth numismatic study.

